



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

has leased the Star Theatre for a month because she looks like Miss Terry, and is announced to appear as *Constance* in "The Love Chase," supported by the disengaged members of the Wallack troupe.

I suppose that imitation really is the sincerest flattery; the proverb says so, and proverbs are concentrated wisdom. But, at this writing, I have not seen Miss Latham and cannot say whether her resemblance to Miss Terry extends further than her tousled hair and eccentric costumes.

* * *

JOHN T. RAYMOND has a new comic character, at last, in a piece written for him by David Lloyd of The Tribune, called "For Congress." It is *General Josiah Limber*, and is brimful of satirical fun and political allusions. It suits Mr. Raymond quite as well as *Colonel Sellers*, and that is saying a great deal.

Having secured this character, Mr. Raymond must now have a play built up around it. "For Congress" is not a play in any sense of the word. There is nothing of it except Mr. Raymond's part; but that is excellent.

STEPHEN FISKE.

Musical Fulleton.

"The night shall be filled with music."

—Longfellow.

THE fall and winter season of Italian opera in New York has come to a close. Mr. Abbey's song-birds have already departed, and Mr. Mapleson's aviary is on the move, if not quite out of hearing yet. In no city in the world has so much music been listened to, and so much money expended, and never has so large an amount been lost in so brief a period. Without taking into account the outlay for the new opera-house—a good half of which will never be recovered—and without considering the hundred and odd thousand dollars expended on scenery and dresses at the uptown house, which remain the property of the stockholders, but would not bring, if sold, ten per cent of their original cost, we should estimate the losses entailed by the difference between the expenses of "running" the performances and the receipts, at the two theatres, at about \$125,000. The operatic whistle is a tolerably expensive toy, whether stockholders or managers pay for it.

* * *

THERE would be no occasion for any one to grieve over this lavish expenditure, if it had borne fruit. Unluckily, it has done nothing of the sort. The new opera house is a bigger place than the Academy, but, regarded as an adornment to the metropolis, it is a failure, and, acoustically, it is inferior to the older establishment. The presence of two opera companies has introduced to the public no new singers of eminence—except perhaps Mme. Sembrich—and only one fresh opera has been brought out in the course of about eighty representations. The opposing forces have been so nicely balanced (for, in lyric enterprises, managerial cleverness with a moderate bank account will achieve as much, if not more, than a long purse handled by an inexperienced investor) that each is as badly off as the other. The skill has been wholly upon Mr. Mapleson's side, and the money upon Mr. Abbey's. Both parties have suffered terribly, but the recovery of the plethoric individual will be much slower than that of his famished rival, who, accustomed as he is to the gilded misery of an impresario's life, "en a vu bien d'autres."

* * *

THERE has been much to admire in the performances at the two opera houses, but no event has occurred that will efface from the recollection of opera-goers the most brilliant achievements of the past. To the management of the new theatre is due the praise of presenting to American audiences the latest European lyric novelty. We refer to Ponchielli's "La Gioconda," which had its first hearing in the United States three weeks ago. The choice was the best that could have been made, although the impression wrought by "La Gioconda" was scarcely profound. "Le Roi de Lahore" is the only work, besides "La Gioconda," that has met recently with anything like popularity in Europe, and even were M. Lassalle and

the Parisian stage attire of the opera secured for its American production, we question if an American audience would care to sit it out. Under the circumstances, then, Ponchielli's masterpiece was what the public required. That "La Gioconda" was somewhat of a disappointment was not exactly the fault of the impresario, save in respect of Mme. Nilsson's inability to fill the leading rôle. When Mr. Abbey determined to produce Ponchielli's opera, he ought to have engaged Mme. Durand, whose acting and singing contributed largely to its impressiveness in London. But Mr. Abbey did not engage Mme. Durand, nor any dramatic prima donna, and depended upon Mme. Nilsson to carry the representation through.

* * *

THE new opera, to describe it briefly, is a lurid Italian melodrama, written for an actress of great force, and set to music by a musician of a virile temperament, with an occasional aspiration to poetry, and thoroughly versed in all the secrets of modern instrumentation. Ponchielli, unhappily, has little or no creative power, and whether too honest to set aside his individuality in an effort to be thought original, or too poor in inventiveness, his writing seldom rises above the plane of straightforward dramatic music. His melodies, with a few exceptions, take the shape of the simple progressions any musician would happen upon if intrusted with a well-defined subject requiring notes to emphasize the text, and his orchestration, while it is clear and muscular, is never distinguished by wonderful tone-color. There are two charming numbers in the score. One is the romance of La Cieca, and the other the air allotted to the tenor in the second act. There are also some forcible measures in the duet between the two women, in act the second, and some of the ensembles are cleverly worked up. But, as a whole, "La Gioconda" is to be set down as a melodrama with a running accompaniment, rather than as an opera in the sense attached to the word by English and American dilettanti. The genius of Verdi was needed to make Boito's libretto subordinate to the music.

* * *

THE presence of Mme. Durand or of a real dramatic soprano would have rendered "La Gioconda" much more eloquent. Mme. Nilsson was quite unequal to the heroine's part. The poetic temperament of this artist is capitally suited to such characters as Margarita, Elsa and Mignon, but completely at variance with the warmth and breadth of such a passion as La Gioconda's. Nor is the voice of the songstress of the desirable quality. It is neither warm nor vibrant, and the prettinesses of her style are out of place in the outbursts of the would-be innamorata of Enzo. In the duet with Laura, Mme. Fursch-Madi, who, as an artist, stands far below Mme. Nilsson, won an easy victory over the latter, mainly through the richness and power of her voice. The cast, in other respects, was passable. Signor Stagno sang Enzo's numbers fairly well, but, from a histrionic standpoint, "walked through" the part. Signor Del Puente gave abundant effect to the personage of Barnaba, but painted the spy in altogether too cheerful colors. What Mme. Fursch-Madi accomplished was accomplished through the medium of her voice, for the Belgian nature of this prima donna is not prone to over-excitement. And the volume of Mme. Scalchi's tones endowed La Cieca with all necessary prominence. "La Gioconda" was superbly placed upon the stage. The Venice depicted was rather the Venice of Canaletto than the city of Ziem—a fact to be mentioned with commendation.

* * *

ABOUT thirteen of the old operas were brought forth at the Metropolitan during the season. There were more people behind the footlights and in the orchestra than were ever gotten together on similar occasions, but nothing phenomenal was achieved, either by the soloists or the masses. The only popular success recorded was won by Mme. Sembrich. Though the new soprano acuto cannot, to use the conventional term, "draw a house," she has more than once carried away her audiences by vocal pyrotechnics of a very brilliant nature. Mme. Sembrich has as yet little feeling, and her tones are deficient in the sympathetic quality distinguishing Mme. Gerster's, but her upper notes are of great metallic glitter and strength, and her execution is marvellously rapid, fluent, and precise. Her best rôle has been Lucia, but

she has been listened to, besides, in "Il Barbiere," in which she won much applause, and in "La Sonnambula" and "Rigoletto." Where heart is required, Mme. Sembrich's performances fall short of the mark. But in all the works she has appeared in, some one point has been reached at which her fiorituri have compelled a whirlwind of applause. Had Mme. Sembrich been the only high soprano in America, this season, she might have established her reputation. Mme. Gerster's feats, however, provoked comparison, and the verdict has been unfavorable, thus far, to the stranger. Still, of Mr. Abbey's new acquisitions, she alone has attracted attention. Signor Stagno is a tenor of the explosive school, with but a shadow of his former voice, except when the tones above the tenor staff are called into requisition. He has been borne with, and nothing more. The few opportunities Mme. Trebelli has been accorded have shown her to be an artist of experience, with a well-worn voice and little personal or vocal charm. Good work has been done by the other performers, but none of the new-comers will be mourned for after they have departed. It is a sad commentary upon somebody's management that M. Capoul, after having gambolled about in "Barbe Bleue," should have been the leading tenor on some of the most notable occasions of the season.

* * *

MR. MAPLESON brought out no new works during his occupancy of the Academy of Music, and although, to do him justice, there was very little cry over his new singers, there proved to be still less wool in the texture of his goods. But he had a very tower of strength in three of his artists—Mme. Patti, Mme. Gerster, and Signor Arditì. Probably very few spectators in an average audience quite realize how great a songstress Mme. Patti is. The judgment of the few, however, sways the opinion of the majority, and between the delight which the least cultivated listener must derive from Mme. Patti's singing, and the feeling that no one could without reason enjoy such a worldwide reputation as the lady possesses, all unite to do her homage. Mme. Patti's voice is not, in truth, the voice that enchanted one in former years. It has lost its honeyed sweetness and some of its brilliancy, and the higher tones are no longer within her reach. On the other hand, it has become richer in the medium and more powerful, while its faultless evenness is still its conspicuous excellence. The art of the songstress has, if anything, become more perfect. As regards firmness and surety of attack, faultlessness of intonation, the power of swelling or decreasing the volume of sound by the nicest gradations, and a mastery of ornament, the present generation is not likely to hear anything approaching it in beauty or finish. There are portions of every opera in which the strongest characteristics of Mme. Patti's style may be detected, but in none of the heavier works in the representation of which she has taken part are they as apparent as in scores of the lighter order. To know Mme. Patti at her best, one should hear her in "Il Barbiere," in "L'Elisir" or in "Crispino." In the brisk action and comic scenes of these and kindred productions her talent as an actress always asserts itself, and her singing, whatever the difficulties of her rôle, is as free and bright as the song of a bird.

* * *

MME. GERSTER, who has made vast progress, both as a singer and an actress, since her first visit to America, has also proved a drawing card of great value. The sympathetic quality of her voice—to use a hackneyed expression, but one for which there is no equivalent—has much weight with an audience, but the improvement in the prima donna's execution has been duly put to her credit by the cognoscenti. Among Mme. Gerster's most notable efforts, this season, has been her Adina in "L'Elisir d'Amore." It was very nearly as admirable as anything Mme. Patti has achieved, with the more youthful sweetness and ring of the voice "en plus." Against her half a dozen successes her critics have to set down one failure—a portrayal of Margarita in Gounod's "Faust," to which she is neither suited by temperament, voice, nor skill as an actress. By the time she will have grown into the rôle, we shall miss her Adina and her Amina. Just now, we are content to forego her Margarita—and shall be, for a few years more.

LORENZO.